SILVERING, OR THE ROLE OF MYSTICISM IN GERMAN IDEALISM

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1. THE MAKING OF MIRRORS

In Spring 1801, absolute idealism materialised in Jena as the shared project of F.W.J. Schelling and G.W.F. Hegel. Central to it were the critique of contemporary philosophy as "reflective" and the assertion of a new "speculative standpoint"–even if the very constitution of the *meanings* of "reflection," "speculation" and their relationship was a task that consumed the subsequent years. For what followed over the next fifty years was (in part) a series of experiments in speculative philosophy, attempts to model thinking as a "magical and symbolic mirror."

The concepts of both reflection and speculation gain their sense from the workings of the mirror: its ontology of original and image (which both is and is not the original) and its evaluative criteria of fidelity (seeing face-to-face) and inaccuracy (seeing darkly). The description of thought as mirror (while traditional) takes on a new urgency from 1801 onwards in the task of differentiating between two types of mirror: a narcissistic, reflective mirror which is to be avoided and a magical, speculative mirror which all philosophers must strive to silver. What distinguishes these types of mirror–that is, the conditions of silvering that account for the transition from reflection to speculation–are Schelling and Hegel's concerns.

What is more, it is important to bear in mind that what *concretely* constitute these mirrors are the philosopher and her text. It is for the philosopher to think and write in such a way that reality reflects itself in a speculative rather than merely reflective manner. It is for the philosopher to silver herself so as to become speculative. Behind Hegel and Schelling's appropriation of this optical imagery therefore lie the questions: how does one become a speculative philosopher? What practices and exercises are required

to transform oneself and one's writing from a reflective state to a speculative one? In other words, in what do speculative forms of life consist?

In what follows, I consider two passages from Schelling's later work in which he attempts to model a speculative form of life. What is most revealing about these examples of "the formation of the speculative"[1] is that Schelling's chosen dialogue partners are not canonical philosophers, but heretical mystics: Böhme and Swedenborg. In order to theorise the becoming-speculative of the philosophical mirror, Schelling resorts to mystical texts; and yet he is always clear–although for very different reasons at different moments–mysticism is only a dialogue partner. The mystical text cannot be the answer, even if it does still point the philosopher on her way.

Consideration of a passage repeated in both the Lectures on Philosophy of Art and the Lectures on Method (*On University Studies*) will help bring out further the key issues at play in this recourse to mysticism. Schelling writes, "Art contemplates the intimate essence of the science of the absolute (philosophy) as in a magical and symbolic mirror."[2] The artistic medium reflects–and so mediates–philosophical ideas. And there is, of course, also an art to philosophising itself: the philosopher too must hold up a mirror to her thinking through the written or spoken word. Articulation is necessarily mediation. So, one of the stakes in philosophising is the nature of the philosopher's mirror–what it reflects and how it reflects it. That is, what is at stake is how the mirror is manufactured, the silvering process that goes into its creation. The art of the philosopher includes the art of making mirrors as well as looking into them–the production of "that dull surface without which no reflection and no specular and speculative activity would be possible."[3] The philosopher mediates

[1] F.W.J. Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente* vol. 2, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier, 1962-75), 436.
[2] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 8; *On University Studies*, trans. E.S. Morgan (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1966), 150.
[3] Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 6. In many ways, what follows is an implicit commentary on the opening to Gasché's

reality through herself and her text–and it is not just the success of such mediation that distinguishes a good from a bad philosopher, it is also the type of mediation she forges in the first place.

However, as the above quotation implies, the philosopher still possesses a quite unique relation to her ideas: for while the artist can only reflect on such ideas from without, the philosopher reflects what she already thinks. The philosopher stands in both a mediated *and immediate* relation to philosophy. What Hyppolite writes of Hegelian thought applies to the above too: "The immediate itself reflects itself, and this identity of reflection and the immediate corresponds to philosophical knowledge as such."[4] In other words, the artist is forever attempting in vain to recover a lost immediacy; the philosopher negotiates *an immediacy always already present*. Schelling's acknowledgement of this presence is seemingly what forces him to begin with philosophy already presupposed–that is, to philosophise "like a shot from a pistol" or to "fall head over heels into the absolute."[5]

And yet, as this essay progresses, we will come to see Schelling criticise precisely this philosophical illusion of the givenness of thought. That is, the above proposes an idealist fiction: that thought is given first (and given first to the philosopher alone). And while he remains committed to this fiction, Schelling will never tire of putting it into question as well.[6] Throughout his works, he uncovers the pre-philosophical, pre-textual practices that give rise to thought. Ideas are mediated and reflected prior to philosophy. Hence, while *to the philosopher* thought appears immediate, such immediacy depends on the forgetting of the very process of becoming-philosophical (the *Bildung* of the philosopher or "the formation of the speculative").

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work and his marginalisation of Schelling's role in "the formation of the speculative." See especially ibid., 23-4.

[4] Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 84-5; this translation from Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 34.

[5] Respectively: G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §27; Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism 1781-1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 588.

[6] Implicit here is a rejection of any simplistic distinction between the "early", idealist Schelling and the "late", critical Schelling.

Already a tangled dialectic is emerging–and this tangle will only increase as we weave our way through Schelling's engagements with mysticism. Philosophical ideas are immediate but need to be mediated to retain their immediacy. This is the necessity of silvering or the requisite indifference of mediacy and immediacy–the *speculative* ideal. At the same time, such immediacy is also dependent on *prior* practices of becoming-philosophical in the first place (breeding speculative forms of life). Immediacy is dependent on both prior and posterior mediation to be articulated as immediacy–and what is more it is also dependent on the philosophical *forgetting* of precisely these practices. What follows is (to some extent, at least) a survey of the ways in which Schelling encounters the mystical text *in order to remember*–to remember, that is, the vast panoply of mediations necessary for philosophical claims to immediacy. Together these recovered exercises in mediation form the art of immediacy.

I argue, however, that it is Schelling's recovery of the *pre*-philosophical practices of mediation in particular which constitute his most significant achievement in this regard. As the above analysis of Schelling's appeal to "the magical and symbolic mirror" of speculation has already made clear, it is these extra-textual exercises that are most prone to be forgotten. I contend that Schelling's relative neglect of them in his analysis of Böhme's mysticism gives rise to some of the instability in his attitude to theosophy during the 1830s and 40s, while his metaphilosophical reflections in *Clara* (with Swedenborg as exemplar) give rise to a more fruitful idea of the life the philosopher must live to become speculative.

2. BECOMING-SPECULATIVE: HEGEL AND SCHELLING'S COMMON PROJECT

When embarking on his *Naturphilosophie* in 1797, Schelling saw speculation as a sickness, a by-product of man's sentimental alienation from nature:

> *Mere* speculation, therefore, is a spiritual sickness in mankind, and moreover the most dangerous of all, which kills the germ of man's existence and uproots his being . . . Every weapon is justifiable against a philosophy which makes speculation not a *means* but an *end*. For it torments human reason with chimeras which,

> because they lie beyond all reason, it is not even possible to combat. It makes that separation between man and the world *permanent.*[7]

One speculates only when cast adrift. The task of the philosopher is thus the annihilation of speculation, which is also the annihilation of philosophy itself (and ultimately consciousness). Very quickly, however, Schelling found himself dissatisfied with such terminology and by 1799 "speculation" gained a very different valence: it became the ideal towards which *Naturphilosophie* moved–the perfection of this branch of the philosophical enterprise is dubbed a "speculative physics."[8] At the same time, Schelling begins to formulate more determinately a form of philosophising opposed to speculation, one that embodies all that is wrong with how we usually think–"reflection." Reflection is the abject other of speculation, and it is the former rather than the latter that now designates a spiritual sickness in which the subject is alienated from the object, preventing secure knowledge. Hence, the 1803 edition of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* exactly inverts the 1797 passage:

> As soon as man sets himself in opposition to the external world. . . reflection first begins; he separates from now on what nature had always united, separates the object from the intuition, the concept from the image, finally himself from himself . . . *Mere* reflection, therefore, is a spiritual sickness in mankind, the more so when it imposes himself in dominion over the whole man, and kills at the root what in germ is his highest being, his spiritual life, which issues only from identity.[9]

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[7] F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 11. The 1797 variant is printed in a footnote.

[8] F.W.J. Schelling, *Introduction to the System of a Philosophy of Nature* in *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 195.

[9] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10-11. For a detailed account of the above, see Klaus Düsing, "Spekulation und Reflexion: Zur Gesammenarbeit Schellings und Hegels in Jena," in *Hegel-Studien* 5 (1969).

At the turn of the century, the conceptual pairing reflection/speculation orientated Schelling's approach to philosophy. Nevertheless, the idea of speculation and its relation to reflection remains underdetermined in Schelling's writings[10]–until, that is, the Spring of 1801 and the arrival of Hegel in Jena as a collaborative partner. A more substantial conception of the reflection/speculation binary seems to have emerged in conversation; it is first hinted at in Schelling's *Presentation* published in May 1801;[11] then fully elaborated in Hegel's *Differenzschrift* released in September.

Initially at least, speculation and reflection are to be understood as opposed: "Since, for speculation, cognition has reality only within the absolute, what is cognised and known in the reflective mode of expression and therefore has a determinate form, becomes nothing in the presence of speculation."[12] Speculating is equated with doing philosophy well and getting at the truth; reflective thought plunges into error. It is a sickness to be cured with the medicine of the speculative standpoint. Moreover, first and foremost, this sickness takes the form of *narcissism.* In reflection, "I remain entirely self-obsessed . . . I never get away from myself," never "leave the circle of consciousness."[13] The mirror-image shows no more than what was present to begin with–and usually rather less. A reflective philosopher therefore becomes trapped in the continual repetition of the same–an "inevitable vicious circle"[14] of sterile limitation: "In its striving to enlarge itself

[10] See Düsing, "Spekulation und Reflexion," 116.
[11] In the Preface, Schelling employs "speculation" positively (F.W.J. Schelling, *Presentation of my System of Philosophy*, trans. Michael G. Vater in *Philosophical Forum* 32.4 [2001], 346) and denigrates "the standpoint of reflection," associating it with thinking from antitheses (ibid., 348) and Fichtean idealism (ibid., 345). In the main body of the work, he goes on to contrast what is "for reflection or in appearance" with "the standpoint of reason" (ibid., 351).
[12] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), 99.
[13] F.W.J. Schelling, *Werke*, vol. 4, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-61), 81.
[14] Ibid.

into the absolute, the intellect only reproduces itself *ad infinitum* and so mocks itself."[15]

On the other hand, the speculative mirror breaks out of the vicious, nihilistic circle of reflection. It gains access to "the great outdoors" behind the looking-glass–and it is to this extent, of course, that the mirror is, as Schelling calls it, "magical." What is reflected in the speculative mirror is not just the philosopher gazing in, but the totality of reality. But this is already to implicitly question the possibility of such a speculative mirror: is such a mirror "magical" because it is in fact a phantasy of intellectual desire? Is there any way to silver a mirror such that it would do what Schelling and Hegel hope for? Put simply, how is speculation to be achieved? Schelling and Hegel's early answer runs as follows: the great outdoors is not to be accessed by smashing through the glass, but instead through radicalising the mirror's limitations, its ineluctable insistence on reflecting back the same.[16] There is no immediate path to speculation: it is to be captured by diversions, strategies and feints. Out of such concerns emerges the ideal of "mediated immediacy"–and, as this paper proceeds, a very Schellingian variant of such mediated immediacy will emerge: an *art* of speculation.

Reflection is defined by dichotomy. "Reflection works only from oppositions and rests on oppositions."[17] In particular, the reflective mirror is that which distinguishes original from image. In so doing, it establishes a hierarchy between the two: the original becomes conceived as ontologically prior to the image and so the cause of the latter. It is here that Hegel and Schelling pinpoint the genesis of cause and effect and the type of mechanical thinking that is based upon them–"an eternal and flowing source of error."[18] Speculation rejects all these dichotomies and hierarchies by asserting the ultimate identity of original and image. As Hegel categorically states it, "the principle of speculation is the identity of subject and

[15] Hegel, *Difference*, 89-90.
[16] Hence Meillassoux criticises Hegel and Schelling for not breaking out of the correlation, but absolutising it. The great outdoors becomes the "great" indoors in a theorisation of total immanence. See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2009), 37-8.
[17] Schelling, *Presentation*, 348.
[18] Schelling, *Werke*, 4:343-4.

object."[19] No duality emerges; instead, there is a sort of participatory metaphysics in which each image is reality in a specific form–and the aggregate of such images presents the absolute, the totality of reality:

> Reason does not recall its appearance, which emanates from it as a duplicate, back into itself–for then, it would only nullify it. Rather, reason constructs itself in its emanation as an identity that is conditioned by this very duplicate; it opposes this relative identity to itself once more, and in this way the system advances until the objective totality is completed. Reason then unites this objective totality with the opposite subjective totality to form the infinite world intuition, whose expansion has at the same time contracted into the richest and simplest identity.[20]

Such a process of gathering together constitutes speculation itself, for all of reality now appears to the philosopher in her self-forged, magical mirror.

Three aspects of this programme for becoming-speculative require note. First, speculation is to be distinguished from reflection in terms of its achievement of totality. Speculation "carries totality within itself"[21] in contrast to the "arbitrary separation of the individual from the whole effected by reflection."[22] As a collection of all possible images of the absolute, the speculative text is nothing less than the absolute itself. Speculation is all-encompassing: nothing is left out–not even, as we shall see, ghost stories and angelic realms.[23]

Second, the identity of the original with its image is once again mediated, rather than immediate. This is "the identity of identity and non-identity" proclaimed by Hegel in the

[19] Hegel, *Difference*, 80.
[20] Ibid., 113.
[21] Ibid., 89.
[22] Schelling, *Presentation*, 357.
[23] C.f. Grant's conception of an "extensity test" for an absolute system. Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2006), 19-21.

Differenzschrift and Schelling in *Bruno* and the *Further Presentations*.[24] On the one hand, reflective thinking fixates on one particular image, thereby implicitly affirming the non-identity of such an image with reality as a whole. Here, "nonidentity is raised to an absolute principle."[25] On the other hand, the speculative philosopher is able to raise herself to totality so as to incorporate the particular image into a system. Speculation is only achieved by means of progressive systematisation.[26]

Third, this emphasis on the multiplicity of images in speculation (as opposed to reflective thinking's fixation on one) is of a piece with siding with *life over death*. The reflective understanding kills, because it places all phenomena in "static, dead pigeonholes;"[27] speculative reason, however, gives rise to life, since it describes a process of becoming.[28] What is seemingly forgotten, though, in Hegel and Schelling's early assertions on the supremacy of life is the necessity of mediation. The affirmation of life needs to be mediated through its opposite, death, and in Part Four of this paper I will reconstruct Schelling's argument that death (or the philosophical simulation of suicide) is a precondition for speculative philosophising.

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[24] Hegel, *Difference*, 156; F.W.J. Schelling, *Bruno, or On the Natural and Divine Principle in Things*, trans. Michael G. Vater (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 192; Schelling, *Werke*, 4:431.

[25] Hegel, *Difference*, 81. See Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 26.

[26] For Hegel, this achievement is *reflection's own doing* – it negates itself by pursuing its own end absolutely. Reflection "has thrown itself into the abyss of its own perfection" (*Difference*, 140), he writes, and thereby becomes "speculative reflection" (ibid., 174), so that "philosophy [is] a totality of knowledge produced by reflection" (ibid., 103). For Hegel, therefore, speculation and reflection are not ultimately as opposed as they first appear. This is one of the points at which Schelling and Hegel diverge: for Schelling, reflection has "only *negative* value" (Schelling, *Ideas*, 11).

[27] Hegel, *Difference*, 80.

[28] Ibid., 91. See also the language of life and death in G.W.F. Hegel and F.W.J. Schelling, "The Critical Journal of Philosophy: Introduction on the Essence of Philosophical Criticism Generally and its Relationship to the Present State of Philosophy in Particular," in George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris (eds.), *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985).

Such–broadly–are the features of speculation and reflection as they emerge in Schelling and Hegel's writings at the turn of the nineteenth century. However, so far I have said very little, for it is difficult to see at first blush how the above connects with concrete philosophical practice. What does it mean, for example, for the philosopher to posit the identity of original and image? What would this look like in a philosophical text? It is at this point that a plurality of interpretations accumulates. It is precisely here that the endeavour to silver a speculative mirror becomes a matter of experimentation. In what follows, I pursue two such experiments from later in Schelling's career in which he attempts to make clearer what speculative silvering might look like–and, in particular, what exactly the philosophical art of mediating to produce immediacy might consist in. At stake, therefore, are rules for the construction of good philosophy–and it is at this point that the role of the mystical text in German Idealism takes centre-stage.

3. THE ART OF IMMEDIACY: WHERE BÖHME WENT WRONG

The mystic most often associated with Schelling's philosophy is Jakob Böhme–and and it is certainly true that Schelling's engagement with his work was long, intense and eventful. Schelling was introduced to Böhme by Tieck in 1799; he obtained a copy of his works in 1804 and became infatuated by him by 1809.[29] As Cyril O'Regan puts it of the period around 1809, "many of Schelling's texts read almost as if they are paraphrases of Böhme."[30] Böhme is the Muse of the middle period, even if between 1807 and 1820 Schelling never once mentions his name.[31] In what follows, however, I consider the return Schelling makes to

[29] On the context of Schelling's early reading of Böhme, see Paola Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and its Appropriation of Böhme* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1999).

[30] Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 462.

[31] This makes the task of assessing the extent of Böhme's influence particularly difficult. In the Anglo-American literature, Robert Brown's *The Later Philosophy of Schelling: The Influence of Böhme on Schelling's Works of 1809-15* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977) affirms Böhme's influence enthusiastically. In Germany, however, the 1970s saw a reaction against the Böhmean Schelling: Harold Holz, *Spekulation und Faktizitat: Zum Freiheitsbegriff in des mittleren und späten Schelling* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1970); Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1972).

Böhme's work at a much later date in his career–the 1830s and 40s. Here, rather than talking *like* Böhme, Schelling talks *about* him, and, what is more, he talks about Böhme's work in terms of the very kind of mediated immediacy that had been set out as the goal of speculative thought as far back as 1801.

The 1841/42 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation* were to be the crowning achievement of Schelling's career. In Summer 1841, the King of Prussia summoned Schelling to Berlin to slay "the legions sprung from the teeth of Hegel's pantheistic dragon" (as the King's own letter put it)[32]–and the Lectures were the immediate result. They opened with a who's-who of nineteenth-century intellectuals in attendance (Bakunin, Burkhardt, Engels, Alexander von Humboldt, Kierkegaard, Ranke, Savigny, Trendelenburg), but ended heaped in derision. Indeed, H.E.G. Paulus published a pirated edition of the lectures for the very purpose of ridiculing them.[33] In supplementary footnotes, Paulus berates Schellingian positive philosophy as succumbing to the worst excesses of theosophy–implicitly linking Schelling's name to Böhme's once more.[34]

Schelling had a twofold response to Paulus's piracy: first, to sue him; second, to add a new section to the lectures determining his relation to Böhmean theosophy more precisely. Hence, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation* of 1842/43 include an additional lecture which explicitly picks up on the accusations: "Have I myself not provided the impetus to bring positive philosophy into contact with theosophy?"[35]

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[32] Quoted in Alan White, *Schelling: An Introduction to the System of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 146.

[33] Republished (without Paulus' editorial interjections) as F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977). For accounts of the Paulus-affair, see Frank, "Einleitung" to ibid., 46-52; Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling: Biographie* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1999), 351, 354-7.

[34] Bakunin, Engels, Leroux and Ruge also commented on Schelling's proximity to theosophy. See the extracts in Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, 542, 546, 552. For Engels, see his "Anti-Schelling" (http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/anti-schelling/index.htm; last accessed: 09/12/12), passim.

[35] F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 174.

There is much in Schelling's reading of Böhme that reflects standard philosophical prejudices against mysticism. A glance at Schelling's treatment of Böhmean theosophy in his 1833 *Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy* makes this "standard" attitude most clear. Here theosophers, like Böhme, are characterised as "philosophers of not-knowing"[36]: instead of argument, they employ "ecstatic intuition and immediate revelation."[37] In this state of immediate ecstasy, "language and knowledge cease" and "all communication of knowledge [becomes] impossible."[38] Such is *the problem of articulation* that plagues mystical thinking: the very immediacy of the experience of God which is the mystic's greatest asset becomes her downfall when it comes to communicating this experience–or even preserving it in clear concepts. Mystical experience is incapable of the mediation appropriate to articulation. As Schelling puts it, "all experience, feeling, vision is in itself mute and needs a mediating organ to be expressed."[39] For the theosopher, though, mediation is conceived as an external, destructive agent which pollutes the privileged experience with which she began. In consequence, Schelling concludes, "the true mark of mysticism is the *hatred* of clear knowledge."[40] Böhme and other theosophists fail to attain the speculative ideal of the indifference of mediacy and immediacy–and hence, it is no surprise that Schelling criticises them by returning to mirror imagery: they do not "place [experience] firmly before [them] . . . to look at it in the understanding as in a mirror (in reflection)."[41] The speculative philosopher, on the other hand, realises the following:

> Everything . . . must first be brought to real reflection, in order to achieve the highest representation. Here, then, lies the border between theosophy and philosophy which the lover of science will chastely seek to preserve,

[36] F.W.J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 179.
[37] Ibid., 181.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 185.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 181.

> without being led astray by the apparent wealth of the material in the theosophical systems.[42]

The philosopher must not run scared of mirrors as the theosopher does.

When Schelling returns to Böhme once more in the 1842/43 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation*, such a critique still plays its part, but something very different is now going on as well. A sense of Schelling's new project of positive philosophy is required to discern this.

The task of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation* is to obtain knowledge of the divine as *actually existing* (i.e. as historically, rather than logically becoming). In other words, the requirement is to cultivate a state of rational ecstasy where God is encountered not as a concept of thought, but as a freely acting person. Positive philosophy leaves behind a philosophy of logic for a philosophy of existence, of freedom and of life. Thus on the one hand, Schelling mounts a critique of all previous philosophy as too rationalistic. Such philosophy has possessed no relation to concrete existence in the world: "Rational philosophy . . . is so independent of existence that it would be true even if nothing existed."[43] Hegel is of course the target of this attack. His system, Schelling claims, remains stuck within thought: it is "empty, logical" and "an unbridgeable chasm [separates] logical necessity and reality."[44] And so, on the other hand, Schelling attempts to set out the method for a non-logical philosophy, one that *does* access concrete being and so escapes the confines of thought. This philosophy does not begin in thought but *outside* it. Positive philosophy thus demands that reason be "set outside itself, absolutely ecstatic"[45]; it demands that reason "become motionless, paralysed . . . in order that through this subordination reason may reach its true and eternal content."[46] And this true content is "extralogical existence."[47]

[42] Ibid., 182.
[43] Schelling, *The Berlin Lectures*, 179-80.
[44] Ibid., 160.
[45] Ibid., 203.
[46] Ibid., 205-6.
[47] Ibid., 155.

It should be obvious how and why Böhmean theosophy could serve as a useful guide here. Böhme's visions of the divine make claim to the same kind of *ecstasis* as positive philosophy. They assume immediate access to the processes God actually undergoes, free of the dross of scholastic metaphysics. Böhmean mysticism accesses the divine through apparently immediate experience. Schelling's characterisation of Böhmean thought in the 1842/43 *Lectures* recognises this,

> In a third type of empiricism, the supersensible is made into an object of actual experience *through which* a possible ecstasy of the human essence in God is assumed, the consequence of which is a necessary, infallible vision not merely into the divine essence, but into the essence of creation and every phase of that process as well. This type of empiricism is theosophy, which is predominantly a speculative or theoretical mysticism.[48]

Böhme's writings exhibit "the inherently laudable aspiration to comprehend the emergence of things from God as an *actual* chain of events."[49]

And yet, while the aspiration may be there, Schelling contends that Böhme ultimately fails to fulfill it. Here the standard German Idealist critique of mysticism continues to play its part (Böhme lacks a rigorous method and so is plagued by the problem of articulation), but it is now obviously insufficient–for the aim of positive philosophy is precisely to throw off the burden of scientific rigour in the name of ecstasy. Schelling now seems to want to be a mystic. As such, his most substantial criticisms end up proceeding in a very different direction.

Namely, Böhme fails to encounter God as actual in ecstasy because he remains in thrall to logic and rationalism. Böhme is still too scientific, too philosophical. Despite its appearance to the contrary, Böhme's vision of God is *too mediated* to serve as a model for Schellingian positive philosophy:

[48] Ibid., 173.
[49] Ibid., 175.

> We have advanced theosophy primarily as the antithesis of rational philosophy, and thus of rationalism in philosophy. Yet at bottom theosophy *strives* to move beyond rationalism without, however, being capable of actually wresting away rationalism's substantial knowledge. . . Theosophy wants of course to overcome such a knowledge, but it does not succeed, as is seen most clearly with Böhme. . . Although he calls it theosophy, thus making the claim to be the science of the divine, the content to which theosophy attains remains only a substantial movement, and he presents God only in a substantial movement.[50]

What separates theosophy from positive philosophy, Schelling now contends, is the remnant of abstract logical thought in theosophical speculation:

> What in particular lies at the heart of Jakob Böhme's theosophy is the inherently laudable aspiration to comprehend the emergence of things from God as an *actual* chain of events. Jakob Böhme, however, does not know of any other way to bring this about than by invoking the deity itself in a type of natural process. The characteristic feature of the *positive* philosophy, however, consists precisely in that it rejects all processes taken in *this sense*, namely in which God would not only be the logical but also the actual result of a process. To this extent, the positive philosophy is more properly speaking in direct opposition with each and every theosophical aspiration.[51]

The question is therefore why Böhme fails to escape thought, logic and rationalism. And Schelling's answer is basically Kantian: Böhme wants an immediate experience of God, but *no* experience of the divine can ever be immediate. There is no "raw," naïve or immediate experience of an external entity and so Böhme's raid on immediacy must necessarily–even if surreptitiously–involve mediacy. It is Böhme's appeal to experience which is the problem,

[50] Ibid., 177.
[51] Ibid., 175.

because experience, Schelling insists, can never resist entirely the activity of reason. Experience is ineluctably logical, and so the mystic remains forever alienated from the actuality of the theogonic process, consigned to a merely conceptual vision of this genesis. Böhme's claim to "immediate experience" still smuggles in mediacy.

So, Schelling contends, a different method is required than that which mystics employ. *Ecstasis* must be cultivated in a different way, a way that avoids appeal to experience. Philosophy must therefore begin *from what exceeds or what is above experience*, with "a being that is absolutely external to thought . . . beyond all experience as it is before all thought."[52] However, of course, for a Kantian (like the late Schelling), what is outside the realm of possible experience is inaccessible to the human subject. In consequence, *indirection* is required to bring about human access to what exceeds experience. In other words, Schelling develops *an art of ecstasy*: in place of the mystic's blunt, direct appeal to immediacy, he develops a *strategic* approach to the transcendent. The immediate is not (*pace* Böhme) immediately available, rather it is only to be obtained as a result of the mediacy of feints and diversions.

In 1833, the speculative mirror was invoked as a means of making experience conceptual: only when immediate experience reflects itself in a mirror can it attain true rigour and be labelled knowledge. In 1842, Schelling appeals to this mirror once again; however, it is for precisely the opposite reason: mediation is no longer a way of transforming vision into thought, but of escaping thought into vision. The speculative mirror is invoked for the sake of the unthought. An immediate vision of God as he actually is is only available *via mediation.*

To return to the terms of my Introduction, the immediacy of the mystic vision is to be safeguarded by posterior exercises in mediation. But, of course, in the terms of my Introduction, this is still to uphold something like an idealist fiction in which the initial moment of vision is still given immediately. That is, in his writings on Böhme (both *On the History of Modern Philosophy* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation*), Schelling neglects the mediation necessary to obtain that moment of vision to begin with. He

[52] Ibid., 179.

neglects those crucial exercises that transform the mystic into a person able to have such visions. The genesis of the mystical form of life eludes him. A symptom of this can be located in Schelling's violent oscillations between conceiving Böhme as a fanatic (*On the History of Modern Philosophy*) and as a Hegelian (*Lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation*). To even attempt to position mysticism stably on the rational/irrational axis might itself seem misplaced[53]; granting its possibility, however, such positioning still assumes too much–namely, that the rationality of Böhme's mystical texts can be classified with respect to two components alone: (a) the immediacy of his visions and (b) the problem of articulation attendant upon subsequently describing them. What is missing here is any account of the processes by which the visions are themselves generated and the implications of that for positioning Böhme on the rational/irrational axis.

To see what such an account might in fact looks like, as well as its significance for both Schelling's encounter with mysticism and his own characterisation of speculation, one must turn to *Clara*.

4. SIMULATING SUICIDE WITH CLARA

Emanuel Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* opens as a project in scriptural exegesis. In the Preface, Swedenborg rails against those who understand the words of Scripture merely "according to their literal meaning."[54] The genuinely religious act of reading goes beyond literalism to plumb "the hidden depths that lie within the details of the Word."[55] There is a spiritual meaning as well–and the purpose of *Heaven and Hell*, according to Swedenborg in these first

[53] Indeed, this is a problem to which philosophy in general is often prone insofar as it attempts to circumscribe the nonphilosophical *by means of its own categories*. Mysticism is a particularly helpful example by which to disrupt philosophy's treatment of the nonphilosophical precisely because of the prevalence of mysticisms that either seem to call for multiple loci on the axis (e.g. medieval speculative mysticism, employing rigorous logic for an apophatic end) or resist the terms of the axis altogether (e.g. Islamic theoretical gnosis). On the latter example, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Theoretical Gnosis, Doctrinal Sufism and their Significance Today" in *Transcendent Philosophy* 6 (2005).

[54] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell: Drawn from Things Heard and Seen*, trans. George F. Dole (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000), 87.

[55] Ibid., 87.

few pages, is to reveal this spiritual significance and so make us better readers. Yet, there immediately arises a skeptical rejoinder to this project: why should we trust Swedenborg? What guarantees his dogmatic assertion of these "pure correspondences" hidden in the biblical text for which "every detail points to something spiritual"[56]? The answer is given casually, in passing almost: Swedenborg is so sure because he has been granted immediate experience of the spirit world of heaven and hell: "I have *also* been enabled to see what is in heaven and in hell, a process that has been going on for thirteen years. Now I am being allowed therefore to describe what I have heard and seen."[57] There is no doubting the correspondences in the Bible, for they are confirmed by what Swedenborg has seen with his own eyes. This passing remark reorients the whole project of *Heaven and Hell*: only minimally an exercise in scriptural hermeneutics, it is rather dominated by accounts of Swedenborg's discussions with angels and observations of heaven's geography. For example, he famously gives the following description of angelic town-planning:

> Whenever I have talked with angels face to face, I have been with them in their houses. Their houses were just like the houses on earth that we call homes, but more beautiful. They have chambers, suites, and bedrooms in abundance and courtyards with gardens, flowerbeds, and lawns around them. Where there is some concentration of people, the houses are adjoining, one near another, arranged in the form of a city with streets and lanes and public squares, just like the ones we see in cities on earth. I have been allowed to stroll along them and look around wherever I wished, at times entering people's homes. This has happened when I was fully awake, with my inner sight opened.[58]

What is most significant for present purposes is Swedenborg's attempt in the Preface to *Heaven and Hell* (and this is illustrative of his whole oeuvre) to present his project as both hermeneutically sophisticated and empirically naïve. The accounts he puts forward

[56] Ibid., 88.
[57] Ibid., 89; my emphasis.
[58] Ibid., 181-2.

arise from both a delicate process of textual archaeology and a simple act of sensing what is immediately accessible. Swedenborgian mysticism partakes in both immediacy and mediacy; indeed, I want to contend in what follows that at one moment in his philosophical trajectory Swedenborgian mysticism represents for Schelling an ideal, precisely owing to the indifference of immediacy and mediacy productive of the speculative standpoint. Swedenborg attains immediate access to the great outdoors of the spirit world without succumbing to the theosophical temptation to silence and the renunciation of language.

Schelling's unfinished novel, *Clara*, is haunted by Swedenborg's achievements. Indeed, it ends with an exposition of "the northern visionary's" doctrine of revelation–an exposition which leaves the characters with a warm glow of "the greatest joy."[59] What is more, the very climax of the third dialogue–the novel's heart and ground–makes reference to Swedenborg once again:

> Truly anyone who dared to speak authoritatively about this [spirit] world would have to have died and come back to this life from the other side, like Plato's Armenian, or must have had his inner being opened to him in some other way so that he could look into that world, as happened to that Swedish visionary.[60]

Swedenborg is here presented as an ideal figure, since he achieved the near-impossible: he experienced the spirit world without having to die (as is the case for most of us, even Plato's Armenian) without even (and this will become increasingly important) falling asleep or being hypnotised. Swedenborg saw the heavens "when I was fully awake, with my inner sight opened."[61]

For the Schelling of *Clara*, this is the very condition to which the philosopher aspires. The spirit world is that aspect of reality in

[59] F.W.J. Schelling, *Clara or, On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World*, trans. Fiona Steinkamp (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 77.
[60] Ibid., 55-6.
[61] For a more general exploration of Schelling's appropriation of Swedenborg, see Friedemann Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg: Mysticism and German Idealism*, trans. George F. Dole (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997).

which the ideal potency (the potency of mind, the ethical and the religious) is at its most intense.[62] To fulfill the speculative aim of philosophically accounting for everything (thereby bringing the system to totality), the spirit world must be included as well. Philosophers need to provide accounts of the spirit world, like Swedenborg–and ideally philosophers would provide such accounts based on an immediate experience that can be clearly articulated without falsification, again like Swedenborg. The task for philosophers is, then, to become Swedenborg.

Hence, the whole of *Clara* is oriented around this problem: how can the living (and, in particular, living philosophers) come to know the spirit world? The model of death is one particularly powerful answer given throughout the novel, since dying is, of course, the most popular means of attaining access to this realm of reality.[63] What is at stake for an absolute philosophy that accounts for the spirit world is *the simulation of death* (achieving precisely what death does but while conscious). As Schelling puts it, "He who loves wisdom will work towards death even here."[64] So, each of the five dialogues in *Clara* sets out conditions for the accomplishment of the Swedenborgian ideal–that is, practical ways to die in life and so imitate the mystical text.

The first dialogue, for instance, interrogates the possibilities and dangers of organised religion for this end. *Clara* opens with a presentation of Catholic festivities on All Souls Day as a symbolic means of communing with the dead:

> We saw a crowd of people thronging toward a gentle incline . . . We joined them so that for once we, too, could watch the moving festival dedicated to the dead that is celebrated this day in Catholic towns. We found the whole area full of people already. It was peculiar to see life on the graves, forebodingly illuminated by the

[62] See Schelling, *Clara*, 79.

[63] One of the central arguments of *Clara* is that death is not a negative moment, but "an elevation into a higher potency, into a really different and higher world" (ibid., 46). See further ibid., 79. C.f. Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*: "Philosophers are beings who have passed through a death, who are born from it . . . The philosopher has returned from the dead and goes back there" (trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta [London: Athlone, 1999], 208-9).

[64] Ibid., 44.

> dully shining autumn sun. As we left the trodden path, we soon saw pretty groups gathered around individual graves: here girls in their bloom, holding hands with their younger brothers and sisters, crowned their mother's grave; there at the grave of her children lost so young a mother stood in silence with no need for consecrated water to represent her tears . . . Here all of life's severed relationships were revived for the spectators who were familiar with the people and the circumstances; brothers came again to brothers and children to parents; at this moment all were one family again.[65]

Schelling's interest in the philosophical potentialities of the religious community was long-standing: his lectures on the *Philosophy of Art* end with an invocation of religious festivity.[66] And here again we read Schelling posit from the very beginning of *Clara* communal celebration as a means of attaining access to the spirit world. In a proto-Bakhtinian (but also very non-Bakhtinian!) manner, the festival becomes a site for the revelation of truth.

But it is seemingly not for everyone: none of the characters in the dialogue feel able to immerse themselves in the festival. The priest and doctor merely watch, while Clara has shut herself away in a Benedictine monastery. Such behaviour exemplifies what is, for Schelling, the other, equally prevalent face of organised religion: *ascesis*. Religion often prescribes collective immersion in the name of truth, but often it prescribes solitary withdrawal–and Schelling is insistent that such ascetic withdrawal from the world (whether physical in Clara's case or intellectual in the case of the idealist philosopher) is precisely what *impedes* access to the spirit world. *Ascesis* is the danger which must be avoided. Such dangers are embodied in the "well-educated, young clergyman"[67] who

[65] Ibid., 9.

[66] "Music, song, dance, as well as all the various types of drama, live only in public life, and form an alliance in such life. Wherever public life disappears, instead of that real, external drama in which, in all its forms, an entire people participates as a political or moral totality, only an *inward*, ideal drama can unite the people. This ideal drama is the worship service, the only kind of *truly* public action that has remained for the contemporary age" (Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 280). See also Schelling, *Werke*, 6:573.

[67] Schelling, *Clara*, 10.

appears in this opening dialogue: his disconnection from the world and subsequent inability to recognise any positive connection between it and the next results in disparaging comments on the festival and ultimately in a sterile, pseudo-Kantian agnosticism. So, when the narrator comments, "We should support all festivals and customs in which we are reminded of a connection with the world beyond," the clergyman responds:

> Today's commemoration certainly has something moving about it; however, if its purpose is to support the thought that we can be connected to the inhabitants of that other world, then I would hold this commemoration to be one that is almost detrimental and I would submit that it be abolished in your church . . . We must honour these old divisions.[68]

It is to such comments that Clara responds with the voice of both speculation and mysticism: "What do cold words and merely negative concepts have to do with ardent longing? Are we satisfied in this life with a bleak existence?"[69]

An alternative is required, and this alternative must provide a means of accessing the spirit world without renouncing this one. It is with this aim in view that the discussion turns to philosophy as a form of worldly curiosity. Philosophising serves as an antidote to *ascesis*: "Merely exercising piety as a way of life, without combining it with lively and active scientific research, leads to emptiness."[70] Indeed, this is a theme which resurfaces again and again in Schelling's philosophy: knowledge of higher things (God, freedom, the mind) does not come at the expense of the lower. Schelling repeatedly berates those philosophical ascetics who indulge in ethereal but ultimately vacuous considerations of the spiritual. Hence, in the 1809 *Freiheitsschrift* he attacks "dreary and fanatic enthusiasm which breaks forth in self-mutilation or . . . in self-emasculation" and "which in philosophy is accomplished by the

[68] Ibid., 12. The clergyman closely mimics Kant's own assessment of speculative mysticism in the closing pages of *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*, ed. and trans. David Walford [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 2:367-73). On Schelling's familiarity with *Dreams*, see Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg*, 11.
[69] Ibid., 13.
[70] Ibid., 17.

renunciation of reason and science."[71] Similar sentiments are to be found in the Introduction to *Clara* as well: "Modern philosophy did away with its immediate reference to nature, or didn't think to keep it, and proudly scorned any connection to physics. Continuing with its claims to the higher world, it was no longer metaphysics but hyperphysics."[72]

This is also a theme emphasised in the second dialogue: becoming-Swedenborg (knowledge of the ideal in its highest potentiation) can only occur *by way of* the natural sciences. It is this point that the character of the doctor presses home to Clara, so as to counteract her flight to the monastery. *Naturphilosophie* is a necessary precondition for being a speculative philosopher. He begins in the first dialogue, "No one should devote themselves to this investigation [of the spirit world] until they have gained a firm and solid ground here, within nature, on which they can base their thoughts . . . Not 'top down' but 'bottom up' is my motto."[73] And he then continues in the second dialogue:

> They [the ascetics] start with what is most general and spiritual and are thereby never able to come down to reality or particulars. They are ashamed to start from the earth, to climb up from the creature as if from a rung on a ladder, to draw those thoughts that are beyond the senses first from earth, fire, water and air. And so they don't get anywhere, either: their webs of thought are plants without roots, they don't hang onto anything.[74]

Knowledge of what is higher must be mediated (reflected) by what is lower. This is our first clue to Schelling's philosophical reconstruction of the Swedenborgian mirror: it involves impurity– the mixing of realms and sciences. As we shall see, this impurity informs the Schellingian definition of dialectic.

Let me temporarily skip the third dialogue and turn to the final two. Here the problem of articulation that so worried Schelling

[71] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutmann (La Salle: Open Court, 1936), 31.

[72] Schelling, *Clara*, 3. See further ibid., 4-5. Whether this introductory piece was actually intended as an introduction to *Clara* or not is a matter of debate (see Steinkamp's notes to these passages).

[73] Ibid., 15.

[74] Ibid., 28.

with respect to Böhme takes centre-stage once again–that is, if the philosopher is able to attain experience of the spirit world by following the rules set out in the earlier dialogues, there remains the problem of transforming such immediate experience into knowledge and subsequently into a textual artefact. This is again to insist on indifferentiating between immediacy and mediacy to achieve the speculative standpoint: the philosopher attains the great outdoors only through mirroring it. Further practices and exercises must be prescribed for the philosopher to turn experience into cognition and text.

The fourth dialogue thus gives rules on the manufacture of a speculative text. This is of course somewhat of a performative exercise, since the rules Schelling sets out for the amelioration of philosophical writing are precisely those meant to be embodied in *Clara* itself. So, the fourth dialogue begins:

> At about the same time, a few days or weeks or so later, a philosophy book arrived in which some of the excellent things it contained were written in a completely incomprehensible language and abounded, so to speak, with barbarism. Clara found it on my table and after she'd read it for a while, she said: Why do today's philosophers find it so impossible to write at least a little in the same way that they speak? Are these terribly artificial words absolutely necessary, can't the same thing be said in a more natural way, and does a book have to be quite unenjoyable for it to be philosophical?[75]

In place of this arid and alienating jargon, Clara and the priest agree that philosophical works should tend to "the language of the people" and even the language of the lover; they should be dialogues, dramatizing a debate to "make it live before our very eyes"; and they should respect the Aristotelian unity of action (something that *Clara*–as a novel–does not do).[76]

These rules are further grounded in a discussion of the nature of language in the fifth dialogue. Language itself possesses the potential for bearing witness to both the natural world and the spirit world, for it "contains a spiritual essence and a corporeal

[75] Ibid., 63.
[76] Ibid., 63-5.

element."[77] Language is both a physical entity (sound/graphic mark) and an ideal one (meaning): it oscillates between nature and spirit. Indeed, Schelling mentions examples where language has become the medium through which to attain occult experience of the spirit world:

> Certain strange cases that cannot be gainsaid are told of people in conditions of rapture coming to understand languages of which they had no prior knowledge, even of their coming to speak in other tongues, as the apostles once did. It would follow from this that in all languages, particularly in the original ones, something of the initial element's purity is still to be found.[78]

Such sentiments are repeated in the 1811 *Report on Schmid's Attempt at Pasigraphy* where once again the depths of language are foregrounded as *the* key tool for an occult heightening of the self:

> We know of a quantity of cases where people in a somnambulant condition have produced poetry which they were never again able to produce in a wakeful state . . . In the *Actis Naturae Curiosum* there is the story of a woman who in the condition of pregnancy fell into an ecstasy in which she sang unknown songs and talked in foreign tongues . . . All this is surely sufficient to prove that the source of language lies in man and, like so much else which hides in him, emerges more freely under certain circumstances and is developed into a higher, more universal sense of language.[79]

Hence, language performs the very ideal of Schellingian speculation in *Clara*: it approaches the spirit world without renouncing the real and the natural. To speak is to deny the power of the ascetic ideal (and here emerges the germ of a critique of

[77] Ibid., 72.
[78] Ibid., 72-3.
[79] Schelling, *Werke*, 8:450-1. When we turn to the discussion of the occult in the third dialogue, this linguistic backdrop needs to be borne in mind. Language forms the basis of occult experience and the oscillation of the dialectic merely mirrors the oscillation of the word.

apophaticism). What is more, this account of the ontology of language also throws light on Schelling's attack on artificial jargon in the fourth dialogue. The resources for good philosophy are already present in language *as it is*; there is no need to remould it in the scientific image. The linguistic barbarians attacked in the fourth dialogue are similar to the ascetics Schelling likewise condemns: both renounce the everyday and the real, thereby concealing, rather than revealing, the truth. The invention of a philosophical language is a redundant gesture; the language of the people already possesses speculative potential.[80] Therefore, Schelling's linguistic concerns are pragmatic: setting rules for the concrete situations in which language can best be employed and its potential mined. Specifically, the speculative ideal is effectuated in a language of sympathy, "a heavenly appearance even here"[81] in which the materiality of the sign is not renounced but perfected.[82] And this incorporation of sympathy into the speculative should not surprise us, for speculation is the overcoming of opposition for identity–the very same dynamic exhibited by a sympathetic understanding. Sympathy–and in particular a sympathetic use of language–is the speculative affect *par excellence*.[83]

It is in the third dialogue that the characters tackle the project of becoming-Swedenborg most explicitly. While the first two dialogues set out some general philosophical prerequisites for this end and the last two (posterior) practices for manufacturing a text that manages to capture experience of the spirit world in linguistic form, it is the third dialogue which directly takes on the challenge of specifying those *pre*-philosophical exercises by which a full

[80] In the contemporaneous *Stuttgart Seminars,* Schelling affirms the maxim, *vox populi vox Dei*. F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars* in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 237.

[81] Schelling, *Clara*, 72.

[82] So, Schelling speaks of "communication without signs via an invisible, but perhaps nevertheless physical, influence" (ibid., 73). And once again the amorous relation becomes a philosophical model.

[83] For more on the affect of sympathy in Schelling's philosophy and its relation to his rhetorical practice, see Joshua Ramey and Daniel Whistler, "The Physics of Sense: Bruno, Schelling, Deleuze" in *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics*, eds. Alain Beaulieu, Edward Kazarian and Julia Sushytska (Lexington, MA: Lexington, 2013), 95-6.

experience of the spirit world is made possible. Moreover, as I have already intimated, the characters realise that such exercises must be modelled on death, for it is through dying that this spirit world is typically reached. Speculative philosophers must simulate suicide to know all of reality–and the third dialogue sets about identifying how. Such a concern with suicide should not be read as a "mystic aberration" in Schelling's trajectory. An insistence on killing the self in order to philosophise is a recurrent one in his oeuvre. For example, it is crucial to the methodology of *Naturphilosophie*: the process of abstraction by which philosophy begins consists in an artificial annihilation of the conscious self: "I had to extract the I from its own intuition . . . to posit the I as unconscious; but the I, to the extent it is unconscious, is not = the I."[84] The philosopher must suppress the I to know nature, and it is only a short step from asserting that unconsciousness is a necessary prerequisite for philosophising to an interest in employing occult practices for such an end.

There is a moment each of us experiences on the verge of sleep, the characters speculate, that gives rise to an unconscious lucidity:

> At the moment of falling into one's final slumber, an indescribable joy flows from one's entire being, and here the soul is in its finest moral and spiritual activity at the same time . . . This mid-condition between waking and sleeping . . . is so infinitely different from anything that we call a dream that its clarity surpasses even the most

[84] Schelling, *Werke*, 4:88. For an analysis of similar claims made in the early *Critical Letters*, see Alberto Toscano, "Fanaticism and Production: On Schelling's Philosophy of Indifference," *Pli* 8 (1999). To make explicit the contemporary stakes of this discussion, c.f. Brassier's insistence on the question, "How does thought think the death of thought?"–namely for genuinely nihilistic thought of the outside to occur, "the subject of philosophy must [somehow] recognise that he or she is already dead." Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 223, 239. As I have argued, the Schellingian suicidal exercises that form a speculative life are preparatory to the description of a realm outside of human life. What they make possible, to quote the final words of Thacker's *After Life*, is "to think a concept of life that is itself, in some basic way, unhuman, a life *without us*" (Eugene Thacker, *After Life* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010], 268).

> vivid waking thoughts, and any normal mode of existing seems to be only a dream . . . Everything is differentiated in detail and is completely without confusion. This condition, however, usually lasts only a second; it disappears in a sudden, shuddering movement.[85]

Such a moment of "waking sleep"[86] is death-like to the extent that death is itself the "last sleep" in which "those who have escaped sleep from within sleep . . . have thereby penetrated through to a waking state."[87] Yet it is available to the living. This leads the priest to affirm the maxim: "Only he who could do while awake what he has to do while asleep would be the perfect philosopher."[88] The third dialogue revolves around the ideal of conscious unconsciousness, death-in-life.

However, as Clara makes clear, if such a moment of dreaming lucidity is experienced at all, it "lasts a second" and then "disappears in a sudden, shuddering moment." The task for a speculative philosopher, therefore, is to *artificially* produce, reproduce and prolong this moment *at will*. It is here that she must appeal to occult practices and other "mysterious phenomena,"[89] such as hypnosis, since this moment of conscious unconsciousness is to be identified with the state of clairvoyance cultivated by the occult. Hypnosis is a strategy to effectuate "the highest clairvoyance."[90] Thus, Schelling describes the workings of hypnosis as follows:

> Through the influence of other people, human beings, acting *as if dead* toward everything apart from the influencer, and with their external senses completely *deadened*, can pass over into an internal clarity of the highest kind . . . If this is true, then I believe that here we would have the experience of a condition that we could justifiably call a higher one and that we could consider to be a wakeful sleep or a sleeping wakefulness. And I

[85] Schelling, *Clara*, 47.
[86] Ibid., 73.
[87] Ibid., 47.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 48.
[90] Ibid., 49. See further Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg*, 6-8.

> would thereby compare it not to death, but to *the condition that follows death*, and one which I believe will be the highest and which will be a clairvoyance uninterrupted by a waking up.[91]

And yet the problem of articulation remains unsolved. In hypnosis, as in sleep and death, one ultimately loses consciousness and the experiences gained in a clairvoyant state are rarely preserved in memory. In other words, the above still does not amount to becoming-Swedenborg, for Swedenborg experienced the spirit world "*fully awake, with my inner sight opened*." He remembered every detail and was able to communicate it soberly in text after text. Hypnosis remains an approximation to this ideal: it fails to satisfactorily indifferentiate immediate experience and art.[92]

For the Schelling of *Clara*, this is the problem that *dialectic* answers. Dialectic is the philosophical tool for becoming-Swedenborg; however, it achieves this parity with the mystical text precisely by *abandoning* the Swedenborgian ideal *in its purity*. Mysticism is only part of the story; instead, the philosopher must diversify and embrace impurity–an impurity in which the philosopher oscillates or (in the language of *Clara*) "rotates" between mystic experience and concept-construction.[93] The rhythm of this rotation defines philosophical dialectic. Whereas the mystic is lucky enough to wholeheartedly pursue her end, the philosopher must compromise and become composite. It is with this in mind that the priest insists on Clara pursuing conceptual clarity *alongside* spiritual *ecstasis*:

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[91] Ibid., 47-8; my emphases. And crucially the characters add that "approaching that higher sleep is very similar to approaching death." Ibid., 48.

[92] And so the doctor still insists in the third dialogue: "And yet . . . this condition [of clairvoyance] is still merely an approximation to the highest one" (ibid.).

[93] Ibid., 35. As is stated in the third dialogue, "What is delicate or spiritual receives its highest worth only by asserting its nature *through mixing* with a conflicting, even barbaric, element" (ibid., 77; my emphasis). Mixing is *the* formal criterion for Schellingian philosophy as a whole, see further Daniel Whistler, *Schelling's Theory of Symbolic Language: Forming the System of Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 238-9; and, in reference to the novelistic style of *Clara* in particular, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, "Le dialogue des genres" in *Poétique* 21 (1975), 168-72.

> What [Clara] lacked was the ability to unpack her thoughts and thereby clarify them. I know what an agreeable effect ordering one's own thoughts into a precise framework has; the soul is happy when it can have what it felt inwardly, as if by inspiration or through some divine thought, expressly worked out in the understanding, too, as if looking in a mirror.[94]

The speculative mirror reappears at the climax of *Clara*, once more as the culmination of philosophical activity. One must cultivate and ameliorate one's experience until it is "as if looking in a mirror." Speculation is only attained once the immediacy of experience has passed through the rigours of an art of immediacy. Such a process does not destroy immediacy; it makes the philosophical presentation of it possible. Ultimately, the speculative mirror potentiates, not annihilates, the mystic vision of the spirit world.

5. DEATH AND/OR THE DIALECTIC

Schelling is a philosopher of mediated immediacy; Schelling is a philosopher of the dialectic; Schelling is a philosopher who conceives death-like negation as a necessary moment in philosophising. *And yet* Schelling is not a Hegelian philosopher. The common search for the speculative standpoint connects Hegelian and Schellingian thinking, but once on their quest each embarks on a series of idiosyncratic experiments in the silvering of mirrors. German Idealism does not consist in a linear narrative; it does not posit one definitive orthodoxy and various alternatives to it. German Idealism is entirely constituted by non-standard speculations–the manufacture of weird and wonderful looking-glasses. For Schelling, mystical traditions form much of the material out of which such mirrors are silvered. Böhmean theosophy is such a crucial dialogue partner precisely because of what it lacks–a mirror adequate to its visions of God. Swedenborg, however, forges his own mirror–"a magical and symbolic mirror" that perfectly produces the indifference of mediacy and immediacy

[94] Ibid., 31. Schelling makes a similar point in the Introduction to the *Weltalter* fragments. See F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. Jason M. Wirth (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), xxxviii.

characteristic of the speculative standpoint. The philosopher strives in vain to replicate this Swedenborgian miracle. Ultimately and belatedly, she must choose between two inferior substitutes–*death or the dialectic*.

In the Introduction, I suggested that at issue in the language of speculation and reflection pulsing through Hegel and Schelling's work is the type of mirroring activity to which thoughts, feelings and visions are to be subjected. Such mediation must manage to keep the philosopher face to face with her material, free from falsification. Moreover, implicitly for Hegel and very explicitly (as I have argued) for Schelling, this question of the kind of mirror to be silvered leads directly to an interrogation of the very personality of the philosopher herself. The art of immediacy emerges out of a speculative form of life–those pre-philosophical, pre-textual practices that make one a speculative, rather than a reflective philosopher. What is more, the preceding has shown the significance of *mystical forms of life* for Schelling's depiction of the speculative philosopher.

The question is, therefore, not merely: who dares to face experience in a mirror–the philosopher or the mystic (as Schelling asks of Böhme)? Nor is it merely: which of them silvers a mirror capable of bearing the glare of experience? But more critically still: *who* are these philosophers and mystics–what breed of silverer are they? Schelling confronts the mystic with the challenge: who are you to do what you do?–just as we must challenge Schelling. And as a result of this challenge, he goes on to appropriate much from the mystic, even if (as is always the case in Schelling's post-1809 output) such appropriation is channelled through indirections and feints. Schelling learns from the mystic's failure, from the mystic's inimitable success, as well as from what can still be imitated. He plunders the mystical text, as he plundered vocabularies, styles and concepts throughout his career. Schelling's systematic eclecticism devours everything in the formation of the absolute system. He leaves nothing out–the mystical text included.[95] The impure

[95] This would give further significance to the remark attributed to Schelling from the 1820s, "If this Tafel [a Swedenborg scholar] could get Swedenborg into a system, that would be something!" See further Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg*, 2. On systematic eclecticism, see Whistler, *Schelling's Theory of Symbolic Language*, Chapter Eleven.

mixture of the Schellingian dialectic is emblematic of this, cobbling together mystic intuition, conceptual analysis and scientific experimentation.

And yet in *Clara* the dialectic is only invoked under a veil of melancholy as an inferior surrogate for those neither inspired by mystic vision nor brave enough to die. In the wake of Caroline's death, Schelling surveys the prospects for those unlucky enough to have no sustained connection to the departed (whether in life, like Swedenborg, or though death)[96] and what remains is the dialectic. So, for the sake of the absolute system (and so the rational reconstruction of the spirit world), the philosopher must mournfully and regretfully carry on salvaging the scattered shards of mysticism.

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[96] As Schelling writes to Louise Gotter on Caroline's death: "I am left with the constant pain that will be allayed by nothing but my own death… God gave her to me, and death cannot steal her from me. *She will be mine again*, or rather, she is still mine during this brief separation." Quoted and translated in Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg*, 22.

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